15/8/74

pp5-6 (Welsh poetry – 'asleep : light
is in their eyes')

c/o The Little Company of Mary
Calvary Nursing Home
Sudbury Hill
Harrow-on-the-Hill
~~Middlesex~~
Middlesex

①

Thursday August 15th

IN ASSUMPTIONE B.M.V.

P.S., dog Toby.
from the 16th cent. ~~[illegible]~~ words for
mastiff & Celt setter as these.
but also because so many dogs
were called Toby they were very
and as with the ~~[illegible]~~ Toby Punch ~~dogs~~
Hounds ~~[illegible]~~ just mentioning, it,
'Toby', & just like pet dogs
no ~~[illegible]~~ ~~that~~ Great Argos and
~~[illegible]~~ Cerberus &c. would not be
but for the Mesolithic & developments.

René annwyl.

I got yr letter dated Aug 11th this A.M. and had yesterday written trying to answer yr ~~questions~~ separate questions concerning p. 35 (Ossa or Pelion) & pg 64 ~~x~~ on flora caleda etc & p.60 O the Academ & ~~[illegible]~~ 57 hautes eagle-haunts etc. But could not get it to post yesterday, but it has now been posted. And was beginning to go through the typescript sheets 29 – 37 & 42 – 47. But this morning have received the complete ① to ㉘ on Rite & Foretime. So am not sure which to make any note about the ~~[illegible]~~ seek it necessary ~~[illegible]~~.

There is so much that I thought so good in both those and also in the later one that I've now read through. I am appalled at the awful sweat ~~it must have been for you~~ ~~both version must have been for you.~~ it must have been for you in both the two earlier sheets, i.e. ~~pages~~ ㉙ to ~~[illegible]~~ ㊲ & ㊷ to ㊼ & even a great labour in the complete draft ① to ㉘ of Rite & Foretime. Yet there are so ~~[illegible]~~ ~~good bits~~ ~~[illegible]~~ whole passages in the earlier pieces that ~~[illegible]~~ I miss in the later draft. For example I thought the stuff about 1919 & Westminster Art School & Post-Impressionist theory & the Catholic Dogma of the Mass. ~~[illegible]~~. (Sheet 42) & lots of things — my scrounging for fire-wood & instead getting a ~~[illegible]~~ squint of the golden vestment & the gusty candle-flame & that tough Mulligan

but the Latin word for 'city' ~~[illegible]~~ civitatem did not mean what we mean by 'city', did it? Whereas I understand that ~~[illegible]~~ in later Roman times it was used to equate with urbs. & ~~[illegible]~~ civis again meant a citizen did it not?

There is one thing, in case I forget it, on Sheet ② of yr typescript in the passage where you say you are uncertain about the 'twin-urbes' ~~[illegible]~~ Rome is': which I intended 'Urbs Roma' and 'Jerusalem' – emphatically not. I was, in fact, thinking of that passage of Scripture ~~about~~ the 'man who is an householder, who bringeth forth out of his ~~[illegible]~~ treasure new things & old'. I have no Cruden or other dictionary of biblical words & can't recall where the words ~~[illegible]~~ occur but I imagine in the N.T. (Gospels?) or may be in the O.T. but I can't recall.

It was perhaps a mistake to use plural urbes for I never, if possible, use Urbs for anywhere but ~~Rome~~, but ~~[illegible]~~ Urbs Roma

(I should not have liked getting a swipe from one of his great ~~[illegible]~~ Mawlers) kneeling lowly in the hay ~~or~~ & lots of other things the bits for ~~[illegible]~~ all the sheets — ~~yes I must [illegible]~~

To return to the Gododdin fragments used as, so-to-say, titles of the seven parts, ~~is~~ they were from Anwyl's translation published in the Journal of the Society of Cymmrodorion away back ~~in~~ early in the present Century and considering the intensive work of later decades I expect are found wanting, none the less I still find in them a main feeling that is absent from later translations. ~~no doubt~~ Anwyl tried to guess ~~the~~ meaning of this very ancient Welsh or ~~proto-Welsh~~ as some would say, proto-Welsh of extensive parts of these linked together stanzas ~~of~~ in praise of the ~~various~~ various leaders ~~of~~ for whom Cataractarum (as Ptolemy called it) was their 'deaths' sure meeting-place' whether or no they had gone to churches & to confess themselves — as would be the normal practice of Xtian men, in a land ~~[illegible]~~ that had for some centuries ~~been~~ of the Late Empire an experience in which the ~~Xtn~~ Xtian sacraments was also the official cult — if Patrick is any guide, Romanitas & Xtianitas ~~[illegible]~~ were considered virtually interchangeable terms, as also for that tedious old Gildas, ~~[illegible]~~ in the middle of the 6th century — ~~[illegible]~~ only a bit before 549 he was writing his De Excidio Britannae, so if ~~[illegible]~~ this great organized ~~organized~~ putsch by King ~~M~~ Mynyddog Mwynfawr with his fort at ~~Din Eiddin~~ Din Eidyn in control of the Votadini (or the men ~~of~~ of Gododdin) of what is now the eastern Lowlands of Scotland ~~it~~ was ~~[illegible]~~ half a century only ~~[illegible]~~ after Gildas was writing, if the date, circa 600, is allowed as it is, in general, ~~[illegible]~~ ~~indeed it is~~

Din Eidyn is now considered the more accurate spelling.

but not by all

But of course ~~[illegible]~~ that means only that there is in it stuff of ~~[illegible]~~ round about 600... but redacted ~~[illegible]~~ & adopted by chaps writing 9th Cent Welsh. But that does not mean the existing MSS might not be as late as the 13th Cent. I dont know the date of the ~~[illegible]~~ earliest MS of Y Gododdin. But that is only my ignorance & I have no ref. books with me here to tell me.

as in the Brittonic Celtic Din = Goidelic Celtic Dun — and both equal O.E. burh

③

And indeed it would seem the most possible date
~~the only possible date~~. It was a pretty chancy affair in any case
for it is a tidy step from Din Eiddin (or Eidyn) ~~over the~~
eastern lowlands of Scotland, across what is now Northumberland
& Durham ~~& part of Yorkshire,~~ Damnation! ~~[illegible]~~. No maps here!
But I suppose it would be a hundred & sixty miles
as the crow flies, or more, it is interesting that
I think I am right in saying that they
skirted the more northern boundary that divided
~~Northumbria into Bernicia and Deira~~ Diera and
Bernicia both parts of Northumbria but it
appears the force ~~of~~ Din Eiddyn skirted ~~Bernicia~~ Bernicia
~~and~~ the more northern of the divisions of Northumberland
& marched many miles south to Diera into what is now
Yorkshire to Catterick (it appears ~~certain~~ certain that
"Cattraeth" is identical with Catterick as the
Roman name for it was Cataracta (in late Latin form)
and the Late ~~British~~ Brittonic ~~[illegible]~~ ~~Cadarachta~~
~~The~~ Cadarachta, which ~~[illegible]~~ according to Kenneth
Jackson would become Catracht by the ~~[illegible]~~
first half of the 6th century. ~~[illegible]~~ Catracht would give
~~[illegible]~~ in A.S. Cetreht & in later Welsh Catraeth.
He says "there is no doubt, therefore, that
the traditional identification of Catraeth with
Catterick is unobjectionable ~~philology~~ philologically".
He says also that says that ~~[illegible]~~ the ~~fort~~ fort
~~[illegible]~~ on the Firth of Forth is rightly spelt
Din Eidyn – the 'd' as English 'd' and
not the doubled ~~[illegible]~~ dd as the Welsh
give the sound of th in English then.
~~Also that Eidyn is correct~~
~~[illegible]~~
And Din Eidyn meant 'the fort (Din) of Eidyn' ~~[illegible]~~
I know it had an Irish form in some
references in an Irish annals, but can't recall
what it was except of course ~~the~~ 'Din'
became 'Dun'. – Kenneth Jackson thinks that

I think that
interesting; I mean
that the O.E. hearing the Brittonic Catracht
would write it as Cetreht.

Sounds like dear,
Walter a bit,

It became known as
Edwin's ~~[illegible]~~ Burh only
became the Northumbrian King
Edwin ~~[illegible]~~ Northumbrian Angles
~~[illegible]~~ as far north as
the Firth of Forth &.
the Din of Eidyn became the
Burh ~~the~~ ~~[illegible]~~ of Edwin
for a while. And I
was astonished to hear a chap who came a bit back,
say but of course Edinburgh is
rightly named after King Edwin,
and this man was an historian at some school!

the war-host of Mynyddog (Mwynfawr, that means as ~~[illegible]~~ Mynyddog
king of Eidyn, was of great wealth & and 'bountiful' or ~~[illegible]~~ luxuriant)
~~came from Din Eidyn~~, took ~~a~~ ~~westly~~ westerly route from
the lands of the ~~V~~otadini ~~of~~ the ~~old~~ eastern Lowlands via the
Carlisle area & the western Lowlands. So that would extend the
length of the march a lot more but would bring the
host ~~[illegible]~~ to the chosen battle site
in Deira (Northern Yorkshire), on the Great North Road
at a point some ten miles south of the ~~[illegible]~~ River Tees
& circa 4 miles south of a place now ~~[illegible]~~ known as
'Scotch Corner' on the Gt N. Road, & also a Romano-British
town called Caturactorum or Catwracto etc.—was very
near an important Roman road junction, &, indeed, after
the conquest by the Angles of ~~the whole of~~ this area
the Northumbrian Kings still had a royal villa
there & indeed it was regarded as a 'capital' of
the Northumbrian ruling house. and Kenneth Jackson
goes on to cite a line or so of the Gododdin
text which would seem to imply that
the Northumbrian Angles were already in
full strength before the 'battle of Catraeth'
took place. I mention this only
because a decade or less before Aneirin's
Gododdin all that part of Northern England &
Southern Scotland were ~~[illegible]~~
securely held by them. For example King Urien of
Rheged ~~[illegible]~~ whose 'capital' but
seems to have been the Carlisle district
the domain of Rheged ~~[illegible]~~ reached north to the powerful
Brittonic kingdom of Strathclyde & southward included
Cumberland, Westmorland & Lancashire & parts of Yorkshire,
had, some time ~~[illegible]~~ between 589 and 590 Urien had taken
a force across the north-west to fight with two
the Angles on Lindisfarne where ~~[illegible]~~ an
Angle chieftain called ~~[illegible]~~ Hussa & Theodoric had secured the place
as a bridge-head to the ~~[illegible]~~ mainland.

or Wotadini

Some 'authorities'
say that Urien
had enlisted Irishmen
as well as British
for this expedition
Anyway this discord
among the Celtic British kingdoms
was fatal & their forces
disintegrated

5

Now the son Owein the Son of Urien had then ~~[illegible]~~ to avenge his great Father's ~~[illegible]~~ murder so had to fight Morcant's forces & others involved ~~with~~ Marcant, as well as face the Angle advance & was successful for a while and in a very famous poem by Taliessin (who was the chief poet of the western British kingdom of Rheged) celebrates Owain's* victory over 'Fflamddwyn' (this is a nickname for ~~[illegible]~~ King Ethelric of Northumbria – it ~~[illegible]~~ is dated c 593 & was the last northern British victory. It is in that poem that the lines quoted so often, including myself in the Introduction to The Ancient Mariner oddly enough, but I use only very few words in translation because I wish only to say that without ~~[illegible]~~ using the word death it says the wide host of the English sleep with the light in their eyes. There are various translations of the Welsh text, but none that ~~[illegible]~~ really give ~~[illegible]~~ the succinct, compact but clear meaning of the Welsh original, in which you know instantaneously that the battle has gone ~~[illegible]~~ ill, for the ~~the~~ once great war-bands of Angles are but dead men on a field of battle lie ~~[illegible]~~ open-eyed.

(~~Marwnad~~) (Marwnad)

* It is really a lament (~~Marwnad~~) of Owain's death

The lines in Middle Welsh spelling

Cysgid| Lloegr| llydan| nifer|
~~[illegible]~~
A| lleufer yn| eu| llygaid
~~[illegible]~~
Asleep (is) England('s)| wide| host (or number) ~~[illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~
light is in their eyes

pronounced approximately

Cysgid Lloegr llydan nifer
Kus-gid lloigr lludan nee-ver
Â lleufer yn eu llygaid
~~Ah~~ ~~lleuge~~
lleye-ver un eye llag-aid

That, as far I can make out, is all the original says

or, in English syntax

'Sleeps the wide deployed ~~[illegible]~~ many mustered ~~[illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~
~~[illegible]~~ of England
The light in their eyes'

It doesn't do the trick, llygaid nifer

6

~~Wide~~ .
usually translated 'wide host' is not satisfactory because we would not refer in English to a great number of enemy dead or alive as a 'wide host', and in modern ~~Welsh~~ the word nifer means 'a number', but we can take it for granted that in earlier Welsh it was used of a war-band as this is the word used in Taliessin (& 'Cant') poem.
and of course, the effect of cysgid (a form of the verb cysgu, to sleep) ~~[illegible]~~ with llydan 'wide' & lleufer 'light' & llygaid 'eyes' is inevitably lost, not only phonetically ~~[illegible]~~ but also in content, especially as it was axiomatic in the bardic ~~[illegible]~~ schools that 'form' & 'content' were made one.

I ~~might~~ might add the ~~two~~ lines preceding the
Cysgid Lloegr llydan nifer. They read

Pan Laddawdd Owain Flamddwyn
Nid oedd fwy nogyd cysgaid
~~when~~, .

Translated as: When Owain slew Flamddwyn
it was no more than sleeping'.

The bards ~~[illegible]~~ loved this kind of boasting.

so that the end word of that line cysgaid 'sleeping' it is immediately followed by cysgid, 'asleep', another part of the verb cysgu 'to sleep', but used in a totally ~~some~~ different sense: Owain had killed his Northumbrian enemy ~~as though~~ as easily as if he slept. They loved such ~~[illegible]~~ ~~[illegible]~~ uses of the same word in some differing grammatical form & differing meaning. You see how damned difficult it is to translate ~~just~~ such intricacies into English verse.

Sorry about all this boring stuff when I ought to be dealing with your piece on Rite & Foretime & the two earlier separate pieces, But no doubt I'll get it posted you —
Much love to Joan yours as ever
[illegible] Rene Dai